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LEXICAL-SEMANTIC GROUPS ‘MOUNTAIN’ AND ‘SKY’ IN CHINESE POETRY AND THEIR ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN TRANSLATIONS (BASED ON MAO ZEDON’S POETRY)

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*This article is devoted to the analysis of lexical-semantic groups “sky” and “mountain” in English, Russian and Chinese and **aims** to identify the way different nationalities perceive these lexical-semantic groups. The **relevance** of the article is determined by the importance of methodological and practical aspects of the study of linguistic meaning in poetry.*

*While writing the article, the following **methods of study** were used: a complex methodology of linguistic research, including methods of the component, contextual, transformational analysis and the deductive-inductive method of analysis.*

The methodological and theoretical basis of the study is a comparative method based on numerous theoretical works of foreign and national scientists. While writing the article, the following results were revealed:

1. As the meaning of the studied Chinese lexemes is much narrower than their equivalents in English and Russian, the words with wider meanings were used in the translations.

2. The definitions of the studied English words contain a large number of differential semes. In English, the definition of a phenomenon may also contain a scientific explanation.

3. The studied Russian words have a rather narrow meaning; the definitions contain fewer differential semes compared to the correspondent English lexemes.

4. As a rule, Chinese definitions consist of an archisem and one differential seme. The Chinese analyzed words have the narrowest meanings.

The conducted research has shown lexical-semantic group influences a lot the formation of linguistic world image of people speaking different languages.

Keywords: lexical-semantic group; translation; lexical-semantic field; seme.

ЛЕКСИКО-СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЕ ГРУППЫ «ГОРА» И «НЕБО» В КИТАЙСКОЙ ПОЭЗИИ И ЕЕ ПЕРЕВОДАХ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ И РУССКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ (НА ОСНОВЕ ПОЭЗИИ МАО ЦЗЭДУНА)

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Данная статья посвящена анализу лексико-семантических групп «небо» и «гора» в английском, русском и китайском языках. Целью работы является выявление различий в восприятии разных национальностей данных лексико-семантических групп. Актуальность статьи определяется важностью методологических и практических аспектов изучения лингвистического значения в поэзии. При написании статьи использовались следующие методы научного исследования: комплексная методология лингвистического исследования, включающая методы компонентного, контекстного, трансформационного и дедуктивно-индуктивного анализа. Методологической и теоретической основой исследования является сравнительный метод, основанный на многочисленных теоретических работах зарубежных и отечественных ученых. По результатам проведенного исследования было выявлено следующее:

1. Т.к. значение исследованных китайских лексем намного уже их эквивалентов на английском и русском, в переводах использовались слова с более широкими значениями.

2. Дефиниции исследованных английских слов содержат большое количество дифференциальных сем. В английском языке определение того или иного явления часто также содержит научное пояснение.

3. *Исследованные русские лексемы имеют довольно узкое значение, их определения содержат дифференциальные семы, количество которых значительно меньше, чем у соответствующих английских лексем.*

4. *Китайский язык наиболее точный. Как правило, дефиниция состоит из архисемы и одной дифференциальной семой. Рассмотренные слова имеют максимально узкие значения.*

Проведенное исследование показало, что лексико-семантические группы оказывают непосредственное влияние на формирование восприятия мира людьми, говорящими на разных языках.

Ключевые слова: лексико-семантическая группа; перевод; лексико-семантическое поле; сема.

Introduction

In modern linguistics, significant attention is paid to the study of the compatibility of the linguistic unit to their characteristics. Specific importance is the study of semantic fields and lexical-semantic groups. As different nationalities perceive the world around them differently it is essential to understand the linguistic component of their perception. As human development is inextricably linked with nature and natural phenomena, lexical-semantic groups of “sky” and “mountain” are highly interesting to analyze. The article aims to identify the way different nationalities perceive lexical-semantic groups “sky” and “mountain”. **The relevance** of the article is determined by the importance of methodological and practical aspects of the study of linguistic meaning in poetry. **The material of the study** is Mao Zedong’s poetry.

In the last century, the Russian semasiologist M.M. Pokrovsky drew attention to the fact that words and their meanings are not isolated from each other, they are united into various groups in our soul, independently of our consciousness [9, p. 35].

The entire vocabulary of a language can be seen as a system of contiguous, and sometimes intersecting lexical-semantic groups. A polysemantic word can be included simultaneously in various lexical-semantic groups.

E.V. Kuznetsova believes lexical-semantic group to be a class of words of one part of speech, where the meaning of words contains a sufficiently common integral semantic component (or components) and typical refinement (differential) components; these words are also characterized by a high pattern of compatibility, wide development functional equivalence and regular polysemy [5, p. 11].

The lexical-semantic group has a field structure. The presence of a nucleus (center) part and a periphery (near and far) part are its typical structural and semantic features. The nucleus part, which forms the center of lexical-semantic groups, includes stylistically neutral words with the most common meanings. The periphery of lexical-semantic groups is lexical units with the largest number of differential semes. It can be special words (terms) or words with a connotative element of meaning [2, p. 44].

The words are combined into lexical-semantic fields or lexical-semantic groups based on a common seme, i.e. based on a value component that is inherited in each lexical unit in a group. Sometimes a category-word can be found that corresponds to a seme, which makes it possible to combine words in one lexical-semantic group. For example: “mountain”: hill, peak, bluff, cliff, etc.

The lexical-semantic group is a part of a larger phenomenon lexical-semantic field. For example, the lexical-semantic group “mountain” (which consists of the nexus word “mountain” and periphery words such as “peak”, “hill”, etc.) is a part of the lexical-semantic semantic field “nature” (that is also formed by other lexical-semantic groups such as “mountain”, “sky”, “water”, etc.)

The words within one lexical-semantic group can be synonyms, but, as a rule, not all the words of one lexical-semantic group may turn out to be synonyms for each other [3, p. 280].

Lexical-semantic groups “sky” and “mountain” are the components of the lexical-semantic field “nature”, which can be referred to as language universals, which are the nucleus of every national language world image.

In the English language, the word “mountain” is a nucleus part of the lexical-semantic group “mountain”. “Mountain” means a raised part

of the earth's surface, much larger than a hill, the top of which might be covered with snow [14]. Mountains! I whip my swift horse, glued to my saddle... (Three Short Poems) [15]. Pointing to our mountains and rivers... (Changsha) [15].

The meaning of the phenomenon "mountain" is also revealed by means of using a periphery word "hill" in the English language. Hill is a naturally raised area of land, not as high or craggy as a mountain [14]. The word "hill" can be found in the following examples of Mao Zedong's poems: Below the hills fly our flags and banners... (Chingkangshan) [15]. Crossing these blue hills adds nothing to one's years... (Huichang) [15].

There is also one more periphery word in the English language that reflects the meaning of the word "mountain", i.e. "peak". The Cambridge Dictionary defines the word "peak" as the pointed top of a mountain, or the mountain itself [14]. Here are some examples: Mist veils Lungkang, its thousand peaks blurred... (Against the first "encirclement" campaign) [15]. Straight from the walls of Huichang lofty peaks, Range after range extends to the eastern seas... (Huichang) [15].

The study of English words that form the lexical-semantic group "mountain" has revealed the semantic component "elevation" (which was literally used in the definition or conditioned by the use of the word "mountain"). It is a common, integral component for this group of words (archiseme). The seme "elevation" is specified by means of using the differential semes "size," "snow," "part of the mountain," "surface description".

In the Russian language, according to the Ozhegov dictionary, the nucleus word "гора" (mountain) means a significant elevation rising above the surrounding territory [12]. The definition contains archiseme "elevation". Here are some examples with the literal translation: Горы! Я в седле, плеть в руке, скакуна ноги скоры... (Three Short Poems) [11]. Вижу горы и рощи в наряде багряном... (Changsha) [11].

Thus, it can be pointed out that the English variant contains such information as elevation, the presence of snow and seize, while the Russian variant includes only some information about elevation.

The periphery word "вершина" in the poem *Dabody* also conveys the meaning of the word "mountain." The Ushakov dictionary defines

“вершина” as “the top of a mountain”. The definition contains archiseme “elevation”, which is specified by the differential seme “part of the mountain” [13]. За вершиной вершина Встает вдалеке ... (Dabody) [11].

As it can be seen, the Russian word “вершина” has a similar meaning with the English word “peak”; however, “peak” can also be a mountain itself, that is why we may conclude the meaning of the word “peak” is wider.

The third word that reveals the meaning of the word “mountain” in Russian is “пик” (a sharp top of a mountain with very steep slopes [12]). In this case, archiseme is concretized by the differential semes “part of the mountain”, “slope description” and “top description”. Пик вознесся над Люпаньшанем... (Lupashan) [11].

As we can see, the meaning of the Russian word “пик” is a bit similar to the English variant of the word “peak”, but it is not the same. While “peak” is “the pointed top of a mountain, or the mountain itself” [14], “пик” is just the top of a mountain (just a part of it). At the same time, the word “peak” does not include such semes as “slope description” and “top description”, while the Russian variant does.

The original text written by Mao Zedong has also a great variety of words connected with the phenomenon “mountain”. The nucleus word is “山”, which means “a rising part of a ground” [17]. For example, 看万山红遍 (Changsha) [18]. 钟山风雨起苍黄... (People’s liberation army occupies Nanjing) [18].

The meaning of the word “山” is almost the same to the Russian word “гора” but differs a lot from the English word “mountain”, as the meaning of the Chinese variant does not contain differential semes, such as “snow” and “seize” that can be found in the English variant.

Another word revealing information connected with “mountain”, which was found in the original text of Mao Zedong’s poetry, is “山头”. According to the ZDK Dictionary, “山头” is the top of a hill [17]. For example, 山下旌旗在望, 山头鼓角相闻... (Jinggangshan) [18]. 白云山头云欲立... (Ant-second round) [18].

“山头” and “вершина” indicate a part of a mountain, namely, the top of it, while “peak” also can be the mountain itself. However, there is some information about the slopes of a mountain in the definition of

the word “вершина”, which makes the word more concretized than the Chinese variant.

The meaning of the word “mountain” is also revealed through using a periphery word “山峰” in the Chinese language. The ZDK Dictionary defines “山峰” as “a mountain spire.” [17] In this case, archiseme is specified by the differential seme “top description”. 六盘山上高峰, 红旗漫卷西风...(Lupashan) [18].

The word “山峰” has the English equivalent “peak” and the Russian equivalent “пик”. When comparing the words, it was found out there is one common seme in “山峰”, “peak” and “пик”, i.e. “part of a mountain” (the top of it in the Chinese and Russian variants, and the top or the mountain itself in the English variant). The English word “peak” does not contain any other semes, while “山峰” and “пик” do. For example, the differential seme “top description” is found in both Russian and Chinese variants, while the seme “slope description” is present only in the word “пик”.

As we have already noticed, lexical-semantic groups of the phenomenon “mountain” in both Russian and English are similar, however, they are not identical. Lexical-semantic groups in both languages are formed by words that do not only specify the meaning, but also describe mountains by supplying additional information. It means that in most of the cases archiseme is highly specified by the differential semes. It is especially prevalent in the nucleus part of the lexical-semantic group “mountain”. Chinese lexical-semantic group of the phenomenon “mountain” is formed by words that also specify the meaning, but most of the time do not describe mountains but indicate a particular detail, which means the definitions do not include several differential semes.

Lexical-semantic group “sky” is represented by two words in English translations of Mao Zedong’s poems. The nucleus word is “sky”. The Oxford Dictionary defines “sky” as “the region of the atmosphere and outer space seen from the earth” [16]. Here are the examples of the usage of the word “sky” from the translations of Mao Zedong’s poetry: Who is dancing with these rainbow colors in the sky? (Dabodi) [15]. The skies would fall... (Three short poems) [15]. Forests blaze red beneath the frosty sky [15].

Moreover, the meaning of the word “sky” is also revealed by means of using the word “heaven” in the English language. According to the Oxford Dictionary “heaven” is a place regarded in various religions as the abode of God (or the gods) and the angels, and of the good after death, often traditionally depicted as being above the sky [16]. Could I but draw my sword overtopping heaven, I’d leave you in three... (Kunlun) [15]. Vying with heaven in stature... (Snow) [15].

The study of English words that form the lexical-semantic group “sky” has revealed “space” as an archiseme. The differential semes are “above the sky”, “spiritual”, “gases surrounding the earth” and “visible”. Whereby, when it comes to the word “heaven”, differential semes overshadow the meaning of the archiseme. The meaning of the word “heaven” influences a lot the perception of the phenomenon “sky” in the English language since the meaning of the word “heaven” includes religious constituents. That is why English speakers start to typify the phenomenon “sky” with something godly. And the first meaning of “sky” (the region of the atmosphere and outer space seen from the earth [16]) comes to the fore.

In the Russian language, “небо” is the equivalent to the English word “sky”. According to the Ozhegov dictionary, the word “небо” means “all the visible space above the Earth” [12]. In this case, “space” is seen as the archiseme, while “above the Earth” is used as the differential seme. Как бы так упереться мне в небо спиной... (Kunlun) [11]. Соревнуются с небом самим высотой... (Snow) [11]. Небо падало вниз... (Three short poems) [11].

When comparing the words “sky” and “небо”, it has been found out there is one common archiseme “space” in both cases; however, once when we start to analyze differential semes, then differences appear. Concerning the word “sky”, differential semes “gases surrounding the earth” and “visible” indicate the phenomenon description from the physical (scientific) point of view; whereas, the Russian word “небо” lacks such information but generally specifies the phenomenon by means of using the differential seme “above the earth”. The existence of differential semes indicating scientific description makes the word

highly specified, which restricts the number of situations where the word can be used. The English variant unites scientific characteristics with general perception, while the Russian definition reveals the concept in general. This way, the Russian language is more similar to Chinese than English, since its definitions reveal only one concept in one definition.

The meaning “sky” is also revealed by means of using the word “небосвод”. According to the Ushakov Dictionary “небосвод” means “visible sky” [12]. Прочертив небосвод, встал могучий Куньлунь... (Kunlun) [11].

As we can see, “небосвод” has nothing common with the English word “heaven”, but it is a bit similar to the word “sky”. Since the meaning of the word «небосвод» is almost identical to the meaning of the word “небо” (all the visible space above the Earth), the part “above the Earth” was just replaced with “sky”.

The original texts which were written by Mao Zedong also have some words connected with the phenomenon “sky”.

The first word found in the original texts of Mao Zedong’s poetry is “天”, which means “a huge space around the earth” [17]. Here are some examples: 天高云淡... (Liupashan) [18]. 山，刺破青天锷未残。天欲堕，赖以拄其间... (Three short poems) [20]. 安得倚天抽宝剑，把汝裁为三截？ (Kunlun) [18].

The meaning of the word “天” is very similar to the meanings of the Russian words “небо” and “небосвод”. “Sky” is seen as a huge vast space extending into the infinity in these definitions. In both languages the archiseme is “space”. However, the words are concretized to the same extent, but slightly in different directions, namely, the phenomenon “sky” in the Russian language is regarded as space extending “above”, while in the Chinese variant “space” extends “around the Earth”. Unlike English, Russian and Chinese definitions reveal the concept in general without adding any physical (scientific) characteristics as the differential seme “gases surrounding the earth” provides.

The meaning of the word “sky” is also revealed through using a periphery word “霄” in the Chinese language. The ZDK Dictionary defines

“霄” as “a visible place upper the soil and as the monastery of spirits” [17]. The archiseme is “space”, differential semes are “visible”, “above the Earth”, “spiritual”. 杨柳轻扬直上重霄... (Dalishuyi) [18].

The Chinese word “霄” has the meaning similar to the English word “heaven”. Both definitions describe “sky” as a religious or spiritual place, containing the differential seme “spiritual”. However, the frequency of words usage with this meaning is different in the English and Chinese languages. The meaning of the phenomenon “sky” is mostly revealed through using the word “heaven” in English, while only one example with the use of the word “霄” was found in the original texts. This way, we may conclude Chinese speakers’ perception of the phenomenon “sky” is closer to Russian speakers’ perception, where the phenomenon is depicted as a huge vast space extending into the infinity, rather than to English speakers’, where the phenomenon is mostly understood by the periphery word “heaven” described by the seme “spiritual”.

The usage of words related to nature in Russian, Chinese and English surely differs a lot in each of the languages. The meanings of English words contain a huge number of differential semes within one meaning. Definitions are specific, but at the same time, they indicate a wide specter of information. Moreover, scientific description in the English definitions is also a specific characteristic that forms people’s perception. The meaning of a dominant-meaning word (a nuclear word) can be replaced by a minor-meaning word (a periphery word), it is mostly due to the fact that the phenomenon is highly described within one word in the English Language, that can restrict the number of situations in which a word can be used (as in the example with the nucleus word “sky” the use of which is replaced by the periphery word “heaven”).

The Russian variants are rather narrow in meaning in comparison with the English ones, the definitions still contain more than one differential seme, but their number is not so huge as in English. That is why a word with a dominant-meaning (a nuclear word) cannot be replaced by a word with a minor-meaning (a periphery word). There is a stratification of meanings within one phenomenon that lets the language specify the meaning of one particular word.

The Chinese language is the strictest one. As a rule, Chinese definitions consist of an archiseme and a sole differential seme. That is why, the analyzed words have the narrowest meanings.

The analysis of the usage of the words of the same lexical-semantic groups in English, Russian and Chinese have proved their semantic structure differs radically from each other, which explains why people speaking different languages do not perceive the world around them through the same prism of consciousness; the language they speak forms their way of thinking.

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